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SUBJECT: SECURITY COUNCIL LOOKING TO BE USEFUL ON SOMALIA

Sensitive But Unclassified; Protect Accordingly.

11. (SBU) SUMMARY. UN A/SYG Menkerios described for Security Council members the bleak realities of Somalia that together dampen his enthusiasm for the recent peaceful change in government -- Mogadishu still lacks basic security; the humanitarian situation is deteriorating further; opposition groups remain uncooperative; human rights abuses are ongoing with the assassinations of four journalists among the recent examples; and the Transitional Federal Government has little capacity to complete even the limited tasks it has undertaken. Several members called for increased assistance to AMISOM and for more serious planning for a follow-on UN peacekeeping operation. The French announced the arrival of French warships in the region to provide humanitarian escort in the face of the ongoing threat of piracy. The French and British contacted DepPolCouns following the consultations to express interest in the USG's call for a new Security Council resolution on piracy off Somalia with the French also asking for more detail on our reference to Combined Task Force 150. END SUMMARY.

12. (SBU) In a brief presentation to the UN Security Council on November 19, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs Haile Menkerios summarized the SYG's November 7 report on Somalia and accentuated the few positive developments -- principally the peaceful process leading to selection of a new prime minister and the president's initiation of broadly inclusive consultations as a confidence-building measure. Menkerios quickly added, however, that the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) remained a virtual non-entity with little capacity to govern, saying "there really isn't a functioning government," especially given what he called the "hardening" positions of opposition leaders. He acknowledged that Mogadishu is still insecure and that general insecurity in Somalia continues to cause deterioration in humanitarian conditions with lack of health care remaining a primary concern. He condemned human rights violations, particularly the assassinations of TFG officials and four journalists, excessive use of force by the TFG, and the closing of three radio stations.

13. (SBU) Members had praise for the efforts of African Union AMISOM troops in Somalia and particular praise for the forthcoming deployments of battalions from Burundi and Nigeria. There was general acknowledgment, however, that AMISOM is not the long-term answer to Somalia's crisis, with South African PermRep Kumalo offering the most stark appraisal: "AMISOM isn't going to make any difference with its low strength and low support." Other members felt that AMISOM could prove at least part of the solution. Several members -- U.S., Belgium, Italy among them -- pledged increased bilateral assistance to AMISOM. Chinese DPR Liu said "the UN should take over AMISOM."

¶4. (SBU) DepPolCouns, drawing on department's guidance, expressed USG disappointment that the Secretariat had not engaged in more detailed contingency planning for a peacekeeping operation (PKO) to eventually succeed AMISOM. Italy, UK, South Africa, France, Russia, and Indonesia made variations of the same point. Russia and Panama insisted that any planning should not suggest that a PKO is imminent. Menkerios offered only to pass along members' concerns to the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations. Qatar attributed the worsening refugee situation solely to the continued presence of Ethiopian troops and generally supported any planning efforts that would lead to their withdrawal. South Africa offered Qatar some support on this point with Kumalo saying "we need to help the Ethiopians withdraw because their presence is becoming the primary focus of those who oppose change."

¶5. (SBU) Qatar raised a concern about piracy off the Somali coast. France announced that French warships had arrived in the vicinity to escort ships carrying humanitarian supplies. DepPolCouns shared Qatar's concern and announced USG support for the International Maritime Organization's recent call for a new Security Council resolution on point. The French and British missions contacted USUN following consultations to express readiness to consider a new resolution. The French also expressed interest in discussing further the USG statement's reference to joint anti-piracy efforts via Combined Task Force 150.
Khalilzad